

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 11063 161043Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /006 W
-----105743 161049Z /10/21
O 160810Z AUG 78
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2541
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 11063

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: BRITISH VESSEL AVON FOREST PROCEEDING TO KAO-HSIUNG

REF: (A) HONG KONG 10990 AND (B) HONG KONG 11036

1. THE UNITED KINGDOM AND HONG KONG GOVERNMENT ARE MOST
GRATEFUL FOR EMBASSY WILLINGNESS TO HELP. THEY SUGGEST
THAT ANY APPROACHES COULD BE ON THE FOLLOWING LINES:

A. THE TAIWANESE SHOULD BE ASKED TO LAND THE REFUGEES,
WHO SHIP'S AGENTS ARE ALL ETHNIC VIETNAMESE, FOR
NORMAL RESETTLEMENT PROCESSING, MAKING POINTS (A) AND
(B) IN REFTEL (A), PARA 3, I.E. INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE
AND HONG KONG'S ATTITUDE TO TAIWANESE VESSELS ARRIVING
WITH REFUGEES. EMBASSY MAY ADD THAT WHEN REFUGEES ARE
LANDED IN HONG KONG FOR PROCESSING, NO GUARANTEES ARE
SOUGHT FROM THE AUTHORITIES UNDER WHOSE FLAG THE VESSEL
IS SAILING.

B. IF THE TAIWANESE REMAIN ADAMANT THEY SHOULD THEN
BE TOLD THAT SINCE THE "AVON FOREST" IS REGISTERED
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IN A UNITED KINGDOM PORT, THE UNITED KINGDOM IS
WILLING TO ACCEPT ALL THE REFUGEES FROM IT WHO
ARE NOT RESETTLED ELSEWHERE AFTER THREE MONTHS.
THERE IS THUS NO DANGER OF ANY OF THESE REFUGEES
REMAINING IN TAIWAN FOR LONGER THAN THREE MONTHS.

2. STRICTLY FOR YOUR OWN INFORMATION, IF THE TAIWANESE

REJECT THIS U K GUARANTEE, THE HONG KONG GOVT MIGHT BE PREAPRED TO HAVE THE REFUGEES SENT BY AIR TO HONG KONG IMMEDIATELY AFTER LANDING AT KAOHSIUNG (ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE MADE BY THE ICEM OFFICE IN HONG KONG THROUGH THE JOINT VOLAG REP IN TAIWAN), PROVIDED THEY COULD THEN BE MOVED TO AN ONWARD DESTINATION - PROBABLY THE UK OR CANADA - WITHIN A FEW DAYS. HOWEVER, THERE IS STILL SOME DOUBT ABOUT WHETHER ONWARD TRAVEL FROM HONG KONG CAN BE ARRANGED SIFFICIENTLY QUICLY; HONG KONG GOVT MIGHT SUGGEST IN THAT CASE THAT THE REFUGEES BE LANDED ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY CAN BE SENT BY AIR TO HONG KONG AFTER A DELAY OF NOT MORE THAN ONE OR TWO WEEKS. THE U K AND H K WOULD, IN ANY CASE, WISH TO KNOW THE TERMS IN WHICH THE TAIWANESE REJECTED THE U K 3-MONTH GUARANTEE BEFORE DECIDING THE NEXT MOVE.

3. THE HONG KONG GOVT UNDERSTANDS THAT CANADA IS PREPARED TO GIVE PRIORITY CONSIDERATION TO THESE REFUGEES WITHIN THEIR OVERALL QUOTA FOR PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT OF 50 VIETNAMESE FAMILIES PER MONTH. HOWEVER, THIS MIGHT REQUIRE THE REFUGEES TO BE IN HONG KONG FOR PROCESS-ING FOR UP TO TWO WEEKS, WHICH MAY NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE HONG KONG GOVT. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS NO INDICATION AT PRESENT THAT ANY OR ALL OF THE REFUGEES WOULD BE WILLING TO GO TO CANADA. THE SHIPS' AGENTS IN TAIPEI MAY ALREADY BE AWARE OF THE CANADIAN OFFER, CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT NOT OF ITS ATTENDANT DIFFICULTIES. THEY SHOULD THEREFORE BE DISCOURAGED FROM BELIEVING THAT IT COULD PROVIDE AN EARLY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM AND FROM METNIONING IT TO THE TAIWANESE AUTHORITIES.

4. THE UK AND HK GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE GRATEFUL TO KNOW EMBASSY ASSESSMENT OF THE LIKELY TAIWANESE REACTION TO AN APPROACH ON THESE LINES AND FOR COMMENTS ON ANY OTHER FACTORS WHICH MIGHT AFFECT THE OUTCOME. THEY ARE, OF COURSE, CONTENT TO LEAVE TO EMBASSY DISCRETION THE TIMING OF ANY APPROACHES AND THE STAGE AT WHICH THE UK 3-MONTH OFFER IS MADE. SHOESMITH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, SEA RESCUES, AVON FOREST M/V, BOAT CASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978HONGK11063
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780361-0514, D780334-1317
Format: TEL
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780860/aaaabxxx.tel
Line Count: 107
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 23faf662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 HONG KONG 10990, 78 HONG KONG 11036
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1728937
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH VESSEL AVON FOREST PROCEEDING TO KAO-HSIUNG
TAGS: SREF, HK, XC, UK
To: TAIPEI
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/23faf662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014